



BENEFICE BULLETIN

Church News for

Bedale, Burrill, Leeming and Thornton Watlass

17th December 2023

Third Sunday in Advent

OUR PRAYERS ARE ASKED FOR

Gaynor, Bel Newman, Mark Newman, Lesley Hall, Delma Bode, John Hall, Donna Bradley, George, Olive Robinson, Harry Scorer, Terry Gregory, Jack, Kath Finkill, Amanda, David, Chris, Liz, Tracey, Sue, Pam Kenyon, Arthur Lightfoot, Alison, Robin, and Dan.

RIP

Ken Gill, Paul Stopford, Dennis Carling, Mary Eden, and Diane Waites.

May they rest in peace and rise in glory

ADVENT LITURGY

Leader: We wait for the coming of Christ, giving life in abundance

Come, Giver of Life

Longing for food, many are hungry.

Longing for water, many still thirst.

Make us your bread, broken for others, shared until all are fed.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in our hearts, shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in your church gathered today.

The third candle is lit and this response is used

The bread of life given for all people a sharing in the body of Christ

Come, Giver of Life

Reader: The desert shall rejoice and blossom abundantly rejoice and be glad in it.

Christ, shine in our world today

Collect

O Lord Jesus Christ, who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you: grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight; for you are alive and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

First Reading - Isaiah 61.1–4, 8–11

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion - to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Second Reading - 1 Thessalonians 5.16–24

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil. May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

Gospel Reading - John 1.6–8, 19–28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord"', as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, 'Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?' John answered them, 'I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.' This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Post Communion Prayer

We give you thanks, O Lord, for these heavenly gifts; kindle in us the fire of your Spirit that when your Christ comes again we may shine as lights before his face; who is alive and reigns now and for ever. Amen.

COMMENTARY ON THE READINGS

Old Testament Isaiah 61.1-4, 8-11

Verse 4 suggests that the likely historical context for this passage is the end of the Babylonian exile, 538 BC, and the return to a devastated Jerusalem. The Isaiah-prophet promises a reversal of fortune. He brings the good news that God, a God who loves justice (v. 8), will vindicate his people before the nations who have oppressed them. In our worship context, however, this reading switches the focus from John to Jesus. In Matthew 11.3ff. and Luke 7.18ff, John, who was in prison, sent disciples of his to Jesus to ask if he is the one to come. As is his habit, Jesus did not give a straight answer but quoted (more or less) scripture: Isaiah 29, 35 and the opening verse of this chapter. These are passages that were taken to describe the messianic age when freedom and health and prosperity would be restored to Israel. Jesus does not say to John's disciples explicitly that he is the messiah but that is the clear implication of his use of Isaiah 61. He is the one for whom John has prepared the way. One might almost say that John could now die happy in the knowledge that his mission had been fulfilled, though the circumstances of his death probably precluded that .

New Testament 1 Thessalonians 5.16-24

Paul also tells us to rejoice, pray and give thanks. In all circumstances to hold fast to what is good and to avoid evil, so that we may be found to be blameless at 'the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ', which liturgically is now not very far off. Though for Paul the coming will be a final historical event, not a repeatable act of worship.

Gospel John 1.6-8, 19-28

We continue the theme of John the Baptist preparing the way, but now in John's version, which is clearly dependent on Mark even though it has been written in a completely fresh way. This is John the Baptist's only appearance in the fourth Gospel, save that the passage continues to verse 37 with the reference to Jesus being the Lamb of God, but that reference to the paschal lamb is about Easter rather than Christmas.

The Evangelist's theological statement about John in verses 6-8 is followed by a short narrative from verse 19 which expands a little on what we have seen in Mark. Verse 19 looks aggressively anti-Jewish in style but loudaioi can also be translated Judeans, which is more appropriate here as the priests and Levites in question come from Jerusalem, the capital of the province that the Romans called Judea. They would not actually have been sent by the Pharisees (v. 24) who were a lay group who had little political power, though much social influence.

When questioned, John came clean and said he was not the messiah (were there people who thought he was?), the subject of many important prophecies. Nor was he Elijah (see last week's note), nor the prophet of Deuteronomy 18.15-19 who would be a successor to Moses. His only claim, through the words of Isaiah (40.3 again), is that he prepares the way for the messiah, the successor of Elijah and Moses. (Perhaps there is a link here to the Transfiguration (Mark 9.213) though that incident is not to be found in John.)

The priests' question about why John baptises is odd. Why shouldn't he cleanse people with water in a ritual of repentance? This was probably not a Jewish problem from around AD 28, so much as a Christian problem at the end of the first century: why should John baptise when – as we know – Christian baptism is the real baptism? Surprisingly there is no mention here of baptism in the Holy Spirit (cf. Mark 1.8) – we have to wait for John 3.1-10 for that – though John makes it clear that someone greater is about to come after him.

Service Times and Venues

Thursdays 10:30am BCP communion at St Gregory's

	<i>Morning Services - St Gregory's, Bedale</i>	<i>Morning Services - St Mary's, St John's and Burrill</i>	<i>16.00—Evensong conference call</i>
16th Dec	18:00 St Gregory's - Carol Service		
17th Dec	9:15am St Gregory's #F	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass	St Mary's Thornton Watlass— Carol Service
		11am St John's, Leeming #	
18th Dec	18:00 Carols Around Burrill		
19th Dec	18:30 Carols around Thornton Watlass		
20th Dec	19:00 St John's Leeming—Carol Service		
24th Dec	9:15am St Gregory's #F	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass	No evensong, see the other services.
	16:00 St Gregory's Crib Service	15:00 St Mary's, Thornton Watlass Crib Service	
		19:30 St John's, Leeming Christmas Communion #	
23:30 St Gregory's Christmas Communion #	23:30 St Mary's Christmas Communion #		
25th Dec	8:00 St Gregory's, Bedale#	9:00 Burrill Mission Church#	No evensong, see the other services.
	9:15am St Gregory's, Bedale#	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass#	

Communion F Facebook

Coffee Morning St John's Church, Leeming

Thursday 21st December - 10:00am - 12:00pm



Pilgrimage/Walk From Bedale To Ripon

Join Rev'd Simon and others on the 29th December for a walk from Bedale to Ripon, setting off at 11am and joining with Ripon Cathedral evensong at 5:30pm.



Thank You

Thank you so much for the card and gift voucher given at our annual flower rota meeting. I have enjoyed all the many years that I have been involved, and always appreciated the help of the other flower arrangers over the years.

Christine Isbister



Thank you to Christine from all at St Gregory's for her hard work and dedication to both the flower arranging and the garden over the last 40 years, you have been faithful in your service.